



Driving Information

DISCLAIMER: The information below relating to French legal requirements is provided for general information only and may not be totally accurate in a particular case. Questions involving interpretations of specific provisions or application to a specific case should be addressed to the French government officials at your local prefecture or sous-préfecture. The Embassy will not intervene with French Authorities on behalf of American citizens seeking to obtain a French driver's license or exchange a U.S. driver's license.

GENERAL INFORMATION

If you are a temporary visitor to France (less than 90 days,) you may drive with a valid U.S. driver's license. In addition to having your U.S. driver's license, visitors are strongly advised to carry an International Driving Permit or attach a French translation to their U.S. driver's license. Also, you must be at least 18 years old to drive in France.

If you are a resident of France (holder of a *carte de séjour* or *carte de residence*,) you may drive in France with a valid U.S. driver's license for a **one-year period**. The start date for this period is the date of validity of your first *carte de séjour*. After this one-year period, it would be illegal for you to drive in France with a U.S. license.

Students who hold a French student visa are allowed to drive in France with their U.S. driver's licenses for the duration of their authorized studies.

Obtaining a French driver's license:

Please select the category that best explains your current driving situation:

1. You have lived in France for less than one year and **you hold a current valid U.S. driver's license issued by one of the states holding a reciprocity agreement with France** (see <http://www.franceintheus.org/spip.php?article376> on the French Embassy's website); if this is your case, please refer to the **special provision information** on next page.
2. You hold a current, valid U.S. license that was **not issued** by one of the states mentioned on the French Embassy's website. See entry concerning the **driver's test** on next page.

1. Special Provision:

If you have a valid U.S. driver's license, issued prior to your first entry into France as a resident, from the states on the French Embassy's website, and you have lived in France for less than one year, you may be exempt from some of the driver's license exams. (For the most current information on states providing reciprocity with France, please refer to information provided by the [French Embassy in the United States](#)). Note: please contact the French *préfecture* in your area to confirm that your state participates in this reciprocity agreement since the list of states may change.) The states noted there offer a reciprocal privilege of exempting French citizens from certain written and road tests and allow French citizens to exchange their French license for a U.S. one. For those who wish to pursue the exemption from driving tests, please promptly seek the advice of your *préfecture*. The U.S. Embassy strongly recommends that you begin the exchange process as soon as possible after receiving your French residence permit (*carte de séjour* or *carte de resident*). If you do not exchange the U.S. license within the specific time limit, you will be required to take both the French written and road examinations. If you continue to drive with your U.S. license after one year of French residency, you will not be insured.

2. Drivers' tests:

If you do not have a driver's license from one of the above-mentioned states with reciprocity agreements, or you have resided in France for more than one year, you must pass both the French written and road tests of the French licensing examination. If you continue to drive with your U.S. license after one year of French residency, you will not be insured.

The *préfecture* will schedule the written test one month after your application is complete. This waiting period is required. Once the written test is passed, you will be required to wait for two weeks before you may take the road test. Taking into account the waiting periods, it is important that you start the application process well before the end of the first year of your residence in France.

Taking the test:

Most candidates for a French driver's license complete a course with a driving school. Although there is no required number of lesson hours for those who hold a U.S. license, the road test must be completed with a dual control car. As a consequence, you will probably have to go through a driving school in order to obtain use of an appropriate car for your road test. With regard to the written test, you should ask the driving school if sessions are organized for those who do not speak French well. If your level of French fluency is advanced, you may also ask the *préfecture* if you can

pass the **written portion** of the exam without going to a driving school. Ask about passing the test as a *candidat libre*.

Information Regarding the Nature of the French Driver's License:

You must apply for a French driver's license at the *préfecture* located near your legal French residence. Please note that French regulations generally require you to turn in your U.S. driver's license when you get a French one. The U.S. license is normally placed in your file in the *préfecture* and is returned to you when you turn in your French driver's license.

The French government takes into account your U.S. driving record. First, the U.S. record indicates how long you have been driving. Second, your U.S. driving record indicates whether you have been a safe driver. You are required to obtain a copy of your U.S. driving record(s) from the Department(s) of Motor Vehicles from the states where you have lived and be prepared to share it with French officials and insurance agents. French licenses will **not** be issued if you do not provide these records at the time of your application.

If you cannot prove that you have held a U.S. driver's license for at least three years, the French license that you will probably obtain is a restricted license (*permis probatoire*). This is likely to be the case if you have not provided sufficient evidence of your U.S. driving record to establish that you are an experienced driver. The restricted license is based on 6 points and is valid for three years. Points may be deducted for infractions of the French driving code, or added for good driving during the three year probationary period. If all 6 points are subtracted during this time for infractions, then the license will be revoked. If you have maintained a good driving record and no points are deducted during the first three years, your restricted license can be turned into a regular license with 12 points. A regular license with 12 points is valid for an indefinite period, but in order to continue to drive you must not lose all 12 points.

Required Documents:

In all cases, in order to apply for a French driver's license you will need to submit the following documents, although other documents may be required:

- **Application form** to request the driver's license [le formulaire cerfa n°11247*02](#) (also available at the *Préfecture*);
- **Your U.S. Driver's license with sworn translation in French;** (see entry below on **Translations of your U.S. driver's license:**
- **A color photocopy of both sides of your U.S. driver's license;**

- **A copy of your U.S. driving record(s) issued by the State Department(s) of Motor Vehicles in the U.S. ;**
- **Proof of current address:** you might present an electricity bill or a rent receipt;
- **Your *carte de sejour* – you should also have a color photocopy of both sides of this document;**
- **A color photocopy of your passport** including the OFII stamp;
- **Four (4) small photographs with light background.** The correct size is the one used for French passports;
- **The fee.** Please check with your local *préfecture*. Note that there is no fee for a driver's license in certain areas.
- For those exchanging U.S. driving licenses, you may be asked for proof of U.S. residence prior to your departure for France.

Resources:

- general information on exchanging a driver's license:
<http://vosdroits.service-public.fr/particuliers/F1460.xhtml>
- driving record:
<http://vosdroits.service-public.fr/particuliers/F1459.xhtml>

Translations of your U.S. Driver's License:

You will need to submit a **French translation** of your U.S. driver's license to the *préfecture*. This can be done by a **sworn translator** (*traducteur expert-juré*), or by presenting a license obtained in the United States at the consular section of the Embassy during **notarial service appointment times**. Important note: the document provided by the Embassy for a consular fee of \$50 is **not** an official translation. If you need an official translation, you must see a **sworn translator**. For persons with medical issues that would impair the driver's capacities, i.e., heart condition or poor eyesight, a medical exam is required.

If you live in Paris, forms and information are available online at the website of the driving section of the *préfecture de police de Paris*.

Préfecture de police

Bureau des permis de conduire
92, boulevard Ney
75018 Paris

Métro: Porte de Clignancourt (Ligne 4)

Telephone: 01 58 80 80 80 or 01 56 55 48 00

E-mail: prefpol.dpg-5eb-permisdeconduire@interieur.gouv.fr

Office hours: Monday through Thursday from 08:30 to 16:30 and Friday from 08:30 to 16:15.
You are advised to arrive before 15:00 if possible.

Auto Insurance:

An unlimited third party liability insurance policy is compulsory for all automobiles driven in France. Whether the owner is using the automobile or not, the vehicle must be insured. As proof of insurance, the owner must present an international motor insurance card (yellow if the policy is purchased in France, green otherwise) showing that the vehicle is insured in France. Please note that insurance policy rates may be affected by the type of driver's license that you hold. If you are holding a restricted license (*permis probatoire*) you may pay higher insurance rates. You may also ask your potential insurance company if a copy of your U.S. driving record and/or a copy of your previous U.S. insurance policy (translated into French) would help you obtain a better rate.

International Driver's License

The American Automobile Association (AAA) issues International driver's licenses in the United States. You will have to request the "APPLICATION FOR INTERNATIONAL DRIVING PERMIT" or "INTER-AMERICAN DRIVING PERMIT" from the

American Automobile Association
1000 A A A Drive
Heathrow FL 32746-5063
USA

or, from your local [AAA office](#) for state-by-state recommendations. Return the completed application to the appropriate state address or to the address in Florida provided above with a photocopy of your valid U.S. driver's license, two passport-size (2 x 2 inches or 5 x 5 cm.) photographs and a check (U.S. banks only) or international money order for \$15.00 payable to the AAA. See: <https://midatlantic.aaa.com/Travel/AAATravelAssistant> in order to obtain the form.

The American Automobile Touring Alliance offers permits through the National Automobile Club. Call [1] (800) 622-2136 or, access their website at: <http://www.nationalautoclub.com>. You may obtain more information by clicking on this link: [international permit](#).

The International Driving Permit is translated into the numerous official languages of the United Nations, including French and English, and serves as a translation to be used in conjunction with the visitor's valid driver's license. It can be useful in emergencies such as traffic violations or auto accidents, particularly when a foreign language is involved.

Bringing Your Vehicle To France

For all questions concerning importation of vehicles to France from the United States, please see the French Embassy website page: [Information for private individuals - Importing a Private Vehicle into France from Canada or the U.S.](#)

United States Embassy
American Citizen Services
4, avenue Gabriel
75382 Paris Cedex 08
France
Telephone: 01 43 12 22 22
Website: <http://france.usembassy.gov>
E-mail: citizeninfo@state.gov

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